

What Programs Will Be Funded?

1. Early Literacy Initiatives: Children today are expected to come to kindergarten ready to read. Children who are not reading by kindergarten face great obstacles in catching up; if these same children are not reading by the third grade, they are statistically much more likely to drop out of high school. Quality early literacy programs make a difference to young children.

2. Professional Development and Support for Early Education Teachers: The quality of a child's first teachers are important to their early learning success. Yet, in Arizona, childcare teachers are among the lowest paid and least supported. To improve the early learning experiences of young children, it is critical to increase the pool and retention of qualified early childhood education professionals through training, formal education and wage and benefit enhancements.

3. Quality Improvements for Child Care and Preschool: Programs, especially those serving low-income children, need additional resources and support to improve the quality of their programs through curriculum development, professional development of teachers, capital improvements, physical improvements, and involvement of parents.

4. Child Health Programs: Early diagnosis of health problems can prevent learning delays by getting children into early intervention programs and services. However, many children do not receive screening for health problems such as vision, hearing, behavioral health or other developmental issues. Training and resources are needed for childcare centers to serve as identification points for health issues at the earliest opportunity. Teachers and parents need information and advice on healthy choices for good nutrition, secure social-emotional attachments, physical growth, oral health and ways to encourage optimal brain development.



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The Arizona Early Education Fund

Providing Quality Learning Experiences
for Children from Birth to Age Five

"Investing in quality early education programs is proven to be cost-effective and is also the best way to give young children the tools they need to start school ready to learn."

Governor Janet Napolitano

What is the Arizona Early Education Fund?

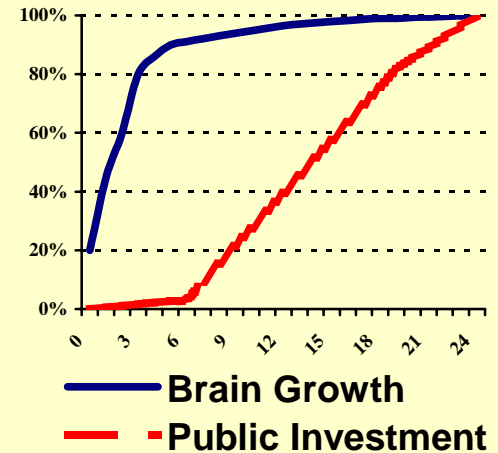
The Arizona Early Education Fund was recently established at the Arizona Community Foundation to help communities statewide build the quality and capacity of early care and education programs for children birth to age five. This Fund was established with the support of Governor Janet Napolitano and the State School Readiness Board.

The purpose of the Fund is to enhance the early learning experiences of Arizona children by building quality into early care and education programs. The Fund will achieve this purpose by awarding quality enhancement grants to programs that demonstrate they can improve the quality of early learning experiences for children in their communities. The Fund will create a new revenue source with an initial goal of making grants of at least one million per year. Grants will not supplant any existing public program dollars, but may leverage other private and public dollars.

Why is Early Education a Priority for Arizona?

The achievement gap for children begins long before they enter kindergarten. In fact, current research proves that young children are much more likely to succeed in school and adulthood if they are exposed to high-quality learning experiences in the first five years of life.

Research demonstrates that for every \$1 invested in high-quality early childhood programs, there is a corresponding \$7 in long-term savings in criminal justice, welfare, remedial education and other related costs. Yet, public and private investments in early education programs are at their lowest when children's brains are in rapid development-- a child's brain is 90% developed by the age of three.



Early Learning Left Out: Examination of Public Investments in Education & Development, Family Policy Center, February 2004.

Collaborating for Reform

Collaboration is essential to accomplishing a bigger vision for children and true reform of Arizona's early education system. There are many partners working to support and reform Arizona's early education system, including:

- Business Leaders
- Foundations
- Faith Based Leaders
- Governor Janet Napolitano
- State School Readiness Board
- United Way Success by Six Partners
- Universities & Community Colleges

Working with these and other collaborators, the Fund will bring stakeholders together to build community partnerships and capacity, and to leverage collective resources.

How Will the Fund Operate?

The Arizona Community Foundation, which has more than 25 years in managing funds and making grants, will provide statewide administration for the Fund. Awards from the Fund will be accomplished through a competitive grant application process. Programs that receive funding will be required to submit a plan for improving outcomes for the children, families and communities they serve. Collaboration at the local level and community needs assessments will be encouraged.

A Strategic Grant Review Committee, which will consist of early education experts from across the State, will review grant applications and make funding recommendations to an Advisory Board. The Advisory Board will be responsible for setting the strategic focus of the Fund and ensuring that the Fund is achieving its mission.

The Fund will accept tax-deductible donations in any amount, including securities or other property valued at \$10,000. For more information, contact:

The Arizona Community Foundation

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